

Elaine Cardenas
Lib 710
Interview and Observation
2-4-10

This morning I met with Cathy Leverkus, a TL at the Willows School in Culver City. The Willows School is a K-8 independent school. Cathy is the only full time TL at the school. She has an assistant who works part time. Below is a portion of the school's founding principles.

The Willows Community School is committed to a strong, progressive education, rooted in academic excellence and social values. Its developmentally structured curriculum is founded on the principles of experiential learning and thematic instruction. These educational principles translate into a classroom experience of daily active learning.

The Willows educational program is characterized by attention to each student's needs and respect for individual differences. The students at The Willows Community School learn to think, to have mutual respect and tolerance, and to understand the value of cooperation.

I chose the Willows because I knew that they did a lot of collaborative teaching and inquiry based learning. This morning I observed a research lesson with 8th grade students. They have been working on this project for awhile. Each student chooses a different topic that interests them. Eg. Fast Food, Stealth Technology, Italian Food, 1920's Then they spend about 8-10 class periods researching and learning about the topic. The TL and the 8th grade teacher model the steps for this research process together. Some of the work is done in the classroom and some of the work is done in the library. This morning they modeled CONTENT/RESPONSE.

The TL displayed two quotes from the same author regarding frogs. One quote said that frogs were disappearing because their environment was polluted. The other quote said that seven new species of frog had been found recently. The TL's modeled response was, this doesn't make sense. How could new species appear if frogs are disappearing because of polluted environment? Some discussion ensued; students also responded to these quotations. Then the classroom teacher read his quote. He had selected a quote about auto-tuning used by various artists who were up for a Grammy award. He modeled his response then opened up the floor to the students. His topic generated a lot of discussion. It seemed like most of the kids had an opinion about various artists.

The students then were asked to go back to their saved research and find at least two quotes about their topic. On a template supplied by the TL, they had to type at least two quotes from their research under "Content". On the right side of the table, they had to respond to those quotes. The librarian encouraged them to use a magazine or newspaper article because she says often those are good examples of bias. She encourages them to show bias in their finished product. The finished product for this process is a "paper" of some sort as well as a project.

These are the questions/responses from our meeting this morning:

1. What grade levels visit the LMC at the Willows?

K-8

2. I know from speaking to you before that you do a lot of collaborating with your fellow teachers. With which grades do you work?

K-8

3. When you first started to collaborate, did you work with all the grades?

We started the school with 90 students. I don't remember exactly how we started. I know we worked collaboratively at least a couple of times a year.

4. Did you meet with resistance at first from the classroom teachers with respect to collaborating on these research projects?

No, not really. Collaboration and inquiry based learning is part of our philosophy here. In addition, I have taught with our administration. (Before they became administrators) They have seen how valuable this process is and support me completely. On the occasion that a teacher has been unwilling to collaborate, the administration has told them that's just the way we do things here.

5. What have been the most successful collaborative projects?

Hands down it's the lessons I've taught together with the classroom teachers on research.

6. Who plans the lessons? Who teaches the lessons?

I generally introduce the concepts. Then the teachers take what I've taught and make it their own. We both teach the lessons. We bring to the lessons our own perspectives and interests.

7. What is your biggest challenge as a librarian?

Technology! It's a catch-22. It's the greatest challenge (especially when it doesn't work) but it's also the greatest tool.

8. What has been the greatest reward as a TL?

My greatest reward is just being here every day with the kids. I love to open their eyes to something new. I love to see them laugh. I just enjoy spending time with them.